

# Vermont Agency of Human Services

## *Actions, Hurrahs, and Successes*

[www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us)

Waterbury, Vermont

September 2005

### **Message from the Secretary**

I want to take this moment to share with you what we as a state are doing to help our fellow Americans who have been devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

In response to the Governor's initiative an extraordinary number of Vermonters have stepped forward to fill three separate convoys totaling 65 trucks with goods that have been sent to the disaster area. We have heard that our trucks were one of the first to arrive from any state and we donated more goods than anyone else.

In addition, over 100 Vermonters with specialized medical skills have already answered a call from the Emergency Management Assistance Compact for possible deployment to the gulf coast.

Countless numbers of others have stepped forward with offers to open their homes to those in need. Efforts to provide shelter for animals until they can be reunited with their owners are under way.

We also have a toll free line for Katrina evacuees to call the Department for Children & Families to help connect them to services. The number is: **800-287-0589**.

I am grateful for the support Vermonters have shown. Clearly the neighbor helping neighbor spirit that is a rich part of our Vermont landscape is alive and well.

*~ Michael K. Smith, Secretary*

### **Employee Assistance Program**

Confidential help is only a phone call away when employees and family members experience problems associated with parenting, relationships, workplace, stress, financial issues, substance abuse, depression, or anxiety. The Invest Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides employees, family members and significant others with confidential, in-person, short-term counseling, assessment, resource and referral information on a broad range of life and work issues. They also provide supervisors and managers with consultation on how to work with staff and help resolve difficult issues using approaches that benefit employees and the organization.

For information or assistance call the confidential referral line at **888-834-2830** or go to the Invest EAP website for state employees at [www.vtstate.investeap.org](http://www.vtstate.investeap.org) and enter the password: **vteap**

## New Field Services Deputy Commissioner Announced

Department for Children and Families Commissioner-Designate Steve Dale enthusiastically announced the appointment of Scott Johnson to succeed him as Deputy Commissioner for AHS Field Services, effective at the beginning of October. Scott is the ideal candidate for the position. For the past year, he has served as the AHS Field Director in the Morrisville District. Prior to that, he worked for 10 years as Coordinator of People in Partnership, the regional partnership for the Lamoille Valley. During those years, he also served as the statewide coordinator of the regional partnerships and was heavily involved in the creation of the plan for AHS reorganization. His 30 year career in human services also includes serving as Executive Director of the Laraway School in Johnson. He has served for many years on the Board of Directors of the Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. Scott has been a leader in his community and in the State.

Please join Steve and the entire Agency as we welcome Scott to his new position in the Department for Children and Families. Scott can be reached at [Scott.Johnson@DCF.state.vt.us](mailto:Scott.Johnson@DCF.state.vt.us)

## Commitment to Quality

The Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) has received funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. These funds will be used to develop and implement a comprehensive quality assurance and quality improvement management system for Vermont's Home and Community-based Waiver. The services provided by this waiver allows elderly and disabled Vermonters to remain in their homes and communities while assuring their health and safety. The goals of the project reflect AHS' commitment to *"improve the conditions of well-being of Vermonters today and tomorrow."* Inclusion of consumers, their families, and community members will be a key component in the project's success. Throughout the development of the Quality Management Plan, there will be opportunities for feedback and input through various public forums. Once developed and tested, technical assistance and training on the Quality Management Plan will be provided to service recipients, providers, and appropriate staff. Additional information about the project is available from the Quality Management Development Specialist, Stephen Morabito, at [stephen.morabito@dail.state.vt.us](mailto:stephen.morabito@dail.state.vt.us)

## Trauma Coordinator Announced

The Agency is pleased to announce that Sherry Burnette, Ph.D. will be joining the team as AHS Trauma Coordinator. This position was created as part of the AHS re-organization process in recognition of the prevalence of trauma histories in the lives of people served across AHS departments; the impact these experiences have on their physical and emotional well-being; and the implications for how we offer and provide effective service and supports. The role of the Trauma Coordinator is to enhance the delivery of human services to those who have experienced significant trauma by: identifying and removing barriers to services; establishing best practices; identifying training resources for AHS staff and treatment providers; and creating new tools to improve treatment services for clients and service providers.

Sherry has an exceptional background. From 1999 to 2004, she was the first Director of Victim Services for the Department of Corrections, where she brought focus, organization and defined services to DOC and our communities for victims and others affected by criminal behaviors. Prior to that, Dr. Burnette worked as a clinical social worker in an Emergency Psychiatric Service and a Cardiology and Cardiac Intensive Care Unit in Medical Centers in Boston, and provided clinical consultation, assessment and counseling for trauma patients at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She was also Dean of Women at the Forman School in Connecticut for 4 years. Dr. Burnett received her Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh; her dissertation was entitled "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder among Firearm Assault Survivors: Risk and Resiliency Factors in Recovery from Violent Victimization."

Please welcome Sherry who can now be reached at:

[Sherryb@wpgate1.state.vt.us](mailto:Sherryb@wpgate1.state.vt.us)

## Sprinkler System Saves Residents and Their Home

Loch Lomond in Concord (Essex County) is a Level III Residential Care Home with 16 residents. On Saturday evening, July 30<sup>th</sup>, a fire was reported in the home. All residents were evacuated and the fire was extinguished by the sprinkler system. The Concord fire department responded and after a short time, residents were allowed to go back inside. Loch Lomond was one of 10 residential care facilities in Vermont that received a grant in 2000 from the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) to install sprinkler systems. On that Saturday night in July, the Medicaid-eligible residents of Loch Lomond certainly must have felt the \$35,000 grant was well invested. For information about DAIL activities contact Joan Senecal at [joan.senecal@dail.state.vt.us](mailto:joan.senecal@dail.state.vt.us)

## From Planting to Harvest ... Out in the Field

In July of 2004, the seeds of change for the transformation of the Agency of Human Services were planted. One year later, we are beginning to harvest the fruits of all that hard work as Field Directors and district staff from local AHS Departments coordinate and collaborate with community partners to ensure better access, better service and better results for Vermonters. As staff members of all AHS Departments we should be proud of the fields we have tilled and the rows we have sown. Here are recent highlights of this transformation. Enjoy the harvest!

**In Morrisville**, the contracted service coordinator position has been created through a unique financial collaboration between the Lamoille County Court Diversion and Restorative Justice Programs, the Lamoille North Supervisory Union and AHS. In her first regular report, the service coordinator indicated that 9 families took advantage of her support. As she provided assistance to those families the coordinator helped establish treatment teams, acquire insurance coverage, identify a unified family plan for services, and link with a local lead case manager.

**In Burlington**, a young man who had exited state custody was "couch-surfing" and resistant to help. This individual benefited from the coordination of the Field Services Director, the young man's Economic Services youth worker, and an outreach worker from Spectrum Youth Services. With their combined efforts and hard work, they have secured Medicaid for this young man, found him a job and provided community supports while they assist him in securing longer-term support services. More importantly, focusing on his skills and strengths rather than his deficits and weaknesses, they have given him a chance to succeed as he transitions into life as an adult.

**In Springfield**, the local Community Response Team comes together on a regular basis to respond to crises and immediate needs. The team is comprised of representatives from the Health Department, Corrections, Family Services, early childhood mental health through Children's Upstream Services (CUPS), Economic Services, visiting nurses, local doctors, a nurse from the area hospital, and the local community mental health organization. In a recent meeting they assisted a pregnant, homeless woman, who was participating in treatment for drug abuse to access the support of the Springfield service coordinator. Their combined efforts resulted in an apartment being secured and the creation of a permanent support team for this young woman and her unborn child. As a client-centered team, they can celebrate one more child with a chance to be born healthy into a secure home.

To discover more about DCF's Field Services Division, contact one of the two Senior Field Services Managers: Monica Hutt at [Monica.Hutt@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:Monica.Hutt@dcf.state.vt.us) or Joe Patrissi at [joe.patrissi@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:joe.patrissi@dcf.state.vt.us)

## OVHA to Initiate Care Coordination Program

The Office of Vermont Health Access (OVHA) is stepping-up to become an active partner with Vermont's health care providers in the delivery of high quality health care to Vermonters receiving Medicaid. Funding was approved by the Legislature as part of the 2006 Budget for a comprehensive **Care Coordination Program**. OVHA and locally-based Registered Nurses / Social Worker teams, will work with primary care practices, hospitals, AHS partners and other service providers to assist Medicaid recipients with complex health care needs by:

- facilitating communication between individuals and health care providers,
- coordinating care plans among all providers,
- follow up with individuals and health care providers after hospital or emergency visits to assure that care plans are being implemented, and
- collecting and tracking important data elements.

The **Care Coordination Program** will be field tested beginning in the fall of 2005 at designated sites in Caledonia, Chittenden, and Washington counties. If you'd like to learn more, contact Liz Reardon, Managed Care Director in OVHA at [lizr@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:lizr@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us)

## Beyond the Boxes of Re-organization

To help move AHS beyond the boxes of re-organization we encourage AHS staff and community partners to please take a half hour and read the June 22, 2005 document: **Transforming Human Services** found at

<https://www.ahsnet.ahs.state.vt.us/Council/Docs/TransformingHS.DOC>

This document is guiding the Professional Development Group's "Curriculum Team" as they work to craft the content and delivery of a professional development curriculum that will support the Agency's transformation. For more information, contact Joe Patrissi, Senior Field Services Manager, [joe.patrissi@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:joe.patrissi@dcf.state.vt.us)

## Methamphetamine Information Sessions for Community Professionals

The Departments of Health (VDH) and Public Safety are presenting Methamphetamine Informational Sessions in each of the state's 12 districts. These 2-hour workshops are designed for community professionals and not intended for the general public. Sessions begin at 2:30 pm and are repeated at 6:30 pm. An upcoming session is scheduled for Middlebury on October 5. A complete schedule is posted on the VT Criminal Justice Training Council website <http://www.vcjtc.state.vt.us/meth.htm> Contact Suzie Wilson, Training Chief, in the Department of Health's Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs, at [swilson@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:swilson@vdh.state.vt.us) for more information.



## Be on the Lookout for Outlook

Sometimes the phrase "be careful what you wish for" applies to the wonderful world of state government, but in this case you wished for a good thing, and you're going to get it. One recommendation to improve information and communication systems that came out of the reorganization planning process: *"Upgrade and interconnect the e-mail systems used across AHS to ensure good e-mail system performance and facilitate better communication and secure information sharing."*

Our AHS Office of Information and Network Systems (the secret name of AHS IT) is working to bring all AHS staff onto a common e-mail system known as **Outlook**. Some folks already enjoy using **Outlook** (DAIL and VDH). Folks using GroupWise will transition to **Outlook** beginning this November. Training and support will be available for staff to learn new skills and keystrokes and utilize the many benefits of **Outlook**. In addition, we are working on Frequently Asked Questions and Answers that will be posted on the ALBERT, the AHS intranet site. We will continue to update these FAQs during the transition.

To make a smooth change to **Outlook**, here are **3 things you can do**:

- 1) Go through all your old emails and delete the ones you don't need. We suggest sorting by date and going through the oldest first;
- 2) Go through the remaining emails and save the critical attachments to the network file server (known as the f: drive for many of you). These can be Excel, Word, PDF, or etc file formats. Attachments tend to be a large part of the mailbox size problem; then
- 3) Go back and delete those attachments from your GroupWise account.

To learn more contact Judy Higgins, Associate Chief Information Officer at [judyh@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:judyh@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us) or Joanne Heath, Network Administrator at [Joanne.Heath@dail.state.vt.us](mailto:Joanne.Heath@dail.state.vt.us)

## Suggestions Invited for Future AHS Updates

Community partners and agency staff are invited to make suggestions for items to be included in future editions of the Agency's update **Actions, Hurrahs, and Successes**. Thank you to those who contributed items for this edition!!! If you have information about a project, new initiative, or success you believe is worth sharing, please email your suggestions to Richard Moffi, in the Secretary's Office at [richardm@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:richardm@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us)

FYI: You can find this and previous editions of **Actions, Hurrahs, and Successes** on the Agency of Human Services website at: [www.ahs.state.vt.us](http://www.ahs.state.vt.us)

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